

September 1, 2005

## **REDUCTION IN METH LABS ATTRIBUTED TO RESTRICTIONS ON COLD MEDICINES**

BISMARCK – At a news conference today, Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem outlined the effect of cold medicine restrictions on the number of methamphetamine labs seizures across the state.

The number of meth labs in North Dakota has escalated over the last eight years, straining law enforcement resources. The first five months of 2005 saw a dramatic increase in the number of meth labs. Meth lab activity for those months was up 62.5% over the same period last year, and showed no signs of abating. Projections show that 2005 was on its way to another record breaking meth lab year.

“While most of the meth used in North Dakota comes from out of state, local meth labs present an immediate menace, because they are everywhere, they are mobile, they are toxic and they are explosive. In addition to the dangers of the end product, the existence of these labs demand immediate action to remove hazardous waste sites, and too often to remove children from the labs,” said Stenehjem. “This is the reason that we have had to concentrate our efforts on ridding the state of these cesspools.”

Stenehjem worked with members of the last legislative session to control the availability of the one ingredient essential in the production of meth – cold medicines containing pseudoephedrine. Restrictions on sales of cold and allergy medicines took effect on June 1, 2005. The impact of these restrictions has been immediate and dramatic. Meth lab activity has declined in the three months since the cold pill restrictions took effect, compared to the first five months of the year.

“This is the first truly good news on the meth lab front since the epidemic started in North Dakota eight years ago,” said Stenehjem. Police and our drug agents have been working as hard as ever, yet we’ve seen this kind of reduction. The only thing that changed on June 1 was the control of the cold medicines. I think it is clear that restricting that is the biggest reason for this dramatic decline. Citizens of North Dakota have accepted the minor inconvenience in purchasing cold medicines, and in exchange are helping to alleviate this epidemic in this state,” he continued.

Other states with similar restrictions have seen the same results. Minnesota, Montana and South Dakota have also enacted restrictions on cold medicines, so North Dakota meth cooks have nowhere else to turn for their products.

“Congress needs to act to make these restrictions apply nationwide. S 103 is pending in the Congress and they need to pass it immediately,” urged Stenehjem. “Because in the meantime, our nation’s children are dying.”

###